I: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

[Boys] [GIRLS] 857

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

FROM SEVEN TO TWELVE[1]

Before the introduction of compulsory schooling and perennial irrigation, the specific responsibility for this period was irrigation—he still helps with it in the afternoon.

Collects leaves, clover, grass, and weeds for feeding the animals, takes animals to water, as tending animals is his main responsibility, whether at home or in the field.

Fetches drinking water on donkey-back.

Helps in harvesting.

Helps in digging land, breaking up clods with the hoe as an introduction to his use of implements.

Takes out and leads his blind or old father or grandfather.

Takes corn on donkey-back to the mill to be ground.

Tasks of previous period if no younger sibling in the family.

Establishment of tasks of preceding period, and helping mother in food preparation.

Fetches water from the Nile in a larger jar, as towards end of this period she can balance the filled jar on head without support of hands. [312] [482] [231]

Takes midday meal to the field, and brings home dates and vegetables.

Helps mother in attending to poultry and sheep, searches for straying sheep or chicken outside. [231]

Daughters of widowed women, or men who are not actually engaged in farming, gather fuel from along the roads. [808] [372]

Brings home 'clay' from the Nile or the field to help mother in building or repairing the oven, the pigeon-cote, the fireplace and the earthen store for seeds.

Carries corn on her head to the mill. [482]

FROM TWELVE TO SIXTEEN

883

Fertilizer-fetching is the main responsibility. Father is responsible for the work on the land, while son is responsible for carrying fertilizer from the hill.

Rears with special attention animals allocated to him: calf, small camel . . . as an investment for his marriage-payment.

Makes ropes by twisting fibre of the palm trunk.

'Sea' is one of her main responsibilities, which means water-fetching from Nile mainly at night. [241]

Occasionally takes women's washing as well as her own to be washed in the Nile [296]

Sieves flour, sews and cooks. [231]

Heats the oven, kneads and bakes. [422]

Hair-delousing. [515]

Wool spinning and yarning.

Makes plate and dish covers out of palm leaves, and dolls to ornament her future house. [283] [285]

Errand-going decreases to the minimum.

May get married before sixteen. [582]

[1] This is the period where compulsory schooling has interfered with the traditional activities of children. 871

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

fined to their homes. A man who does not frequently mix with his fellow men outside the house is branded as the 'man of the oven', while a woman who continually leaves her house is called 'strayer'. Men meet for their spontaneous gathering and gossip outside the house, while women meet inside. While women are expected to adorn themselves with earrings, nose rings, kohl for the eyes, finger rings, anklets, henna for the palms (almost an ornament for every sense), men are supposed to refrain. Moreover while men shave or cut their hair, women leave it to grow as long as possible and never cut it.[1] While men wear pants, women do not; while women's speech is usually sprinkled with words in the diminutive, men are not expected to follow this habit; while women carry things on their heads, men never do so, and only carry things either in the hands, or on the back or shoulders. On walking along the village streets and alleyways, women keep near the wall, while men walk in the middle of the street. Although both men and women are fond of dramatizing their speech, yet they have different stylized ways of doing this. While men use their index fingers as a sign of threatening, women point out with their middle finger. Women grasp their chin or slap their face with open palms for surprise or regret or shame, while men slowly clap their hands. On being angry or hurt, the woman's cry is 'Abouh, abouh . . .' and in joy her shrill cry is 'Wri, ri, ri . . .'. Men are not supposed to utter any cries of joy or anger. In threatening a man will threaten in default to cut off his moustache, while a woman threatens to cut off her head hair. Men and women use different invectives and imprecations as well as different greetings. Women in their speech draw out their words, whereas men end them abruptly. Women do not participate either in individual or communal worship in the mosque as they are excluded altogether from it, but there is no Koranic support for this. On the other hand, they are usually the performers of magico-religious rituals connected with averting the evil eye, bringing about pregnancy, or healing the sick; and men are less engaged in this sphere. It is also interesting to note that, as in Classical Arabic, the dialect of the village attached the feminine 'n' at the end of the verb in the third person feminine plural, a feature which does not occur in most of the urban dialects in Egypt.

Between men and women there is complete avoidance in looking at each other face to face, except in the case of certain kinships specified by the Koran. On meeting men in the street, women have always to turn their heads to one side, and pull their head covering across their face, and men are expected to lower their heads and not stare at women. The sex taboo on looking and talking without reserve does not apply to children till they reach the adolescent stage, when they gradually acquire such norms and begin to observe them as a part of their value system of politeness. On the other hand, very old women and men are freed from such restric-

[1] See Appendix VIII, for a boy who said that he would be ashamed if his hair grew long, presumably because it looks like that of girls.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Little girls have a perfectly free life until they reach marriageable age, when their freedom is somewhat more restricted. After marriage they are still more secluded, but the degree of seclusion varies, being rather stricter among the better-class peasants than among those of lower social status. Among the latter there may be considerable freedom of intercourse between the sexes. It must be remembered that there are quite definite social grades among the *fellāḥīn*, the lines of demarcation being very strongly em-

FIG. 14. A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN

phasized. For instance, in a family well known to me the women are not allowed to speak freely to the men, and, with the exception of the elderly mother, none of the females are allowed to enter a room in which male visitors may be seated, and even the mother does not appear unless there is something which renders her presence necessary. One of the women in this family is a widow of about thirty years of age, possibly a little older, and her brother objects to her even being seen walking in the streets of their village, except when she goes, accompanied by her mother, to get the water for household use or for some other necessary purpose. He told me that if he allowed her to be seen walking about in public

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

such a charm from the neck, the charm-case hanging under the right arm. I am told that a small piece of the placenta is sometimes used in this way instead of the cord, but so far I have not come across this usage myself.

Another method employed to prolong a child's life is the following. If a Muslim woman has had several children who have all died in early infancy, when another is born she asks a Coptic woman to give her *barakeh* (blessing, good luck), in order that the newly born child may live. The *barakeh* she asks for is either a part of a dress which has been worn by the Coptic woman or her husband, or else a dress which has belonged to one of their children. The dress *must* be that of a Christian, not of a Muslim. Among the Copts this custom does not exist. I asked why a Muslim should ask for the dress of a Christian, and I was told it was because they are good people.

A woman who has lost several children and wishes to ensure that the newly born infant will live acts as follows. She carries her baby in her arms, and, with a basket made of palm-leaves on her head,[1] goes from house to house begging for *ḥaseneh* (charity) for her child. She will do this however rich she may be, behaving as if she were a very poor woman. Some people may give her money, others *battaw* or *khubz* (two kinds of bread) and other articles of food. She will then distribute these gifts among the poor people of the village, even if she be as poor as they. She believes that, as the result of this action, God, or her *ḳarîneh*, will allow her to keep her child.

On many different occasions women have brought their babies to me with the request that I would spit into their mouths, in order to give them *barakeh* and make them live long! Also I found that many of my old clothes that I had thrown away were torn up, and small pieces of them given to various mothers in the village, who hung them on their babies as charms to prolong life. One expectant mother came and begged me to let her have one of my old frocks, in order that her child might be born on to it! She, poor thing, did not get her request granted, and I regret to say that her baby died very soon after birth!

Some women kill a puppy at the seventh month of their pregnancy. The puppy is killed over a cloth, on to which the blood flows. As soon as the child is born it is wrapped in this blood-

[1] The ordinary basket, called *maḳṭaf*.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

are left on the ground to dry and harden in the sun. Every housewife is careful to see that she has always a plentiful supply of this fuel, which is neatly stacked in large quantities on the roofs of the houses.

Basket-making is a very large and important industry. Certain kinds of baskets are made in almost every village throughout the country, but a few types are characteristic of certain localities only. Many of the commoner kinds of baskets are strong and well made, but the finest work is to be found in the more southern provinces; indeed, the farther south one goes the better the workmanship. Baskets are made by both men and women, though I have found that in some localities this work tends to be monopolized by one of the sexes only; and one type of basket at least, so I was told, is made only by men. Baskets are constructed mostly out of date-palm leaves and the mid-ribs of palm-branches, but one variety in the south is made from the leaves of *dōm*-palms. These particular baskets are easily to be recognized by the shiny surface of the material employed in their manufacture.

FIG. 82. BUILDING A WALL

The commonest and one of the most useful baskets in general use is called the *maḳṭaf* (Fig. 83). It is used in field-work, for the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

clearing away of rubbish, for removing *sibākh* (the earth obtained from ancient rubbish mounds, used as a fertilizer), and for the transport of grain; in it, moreover, a woman generally places the dry roots which she collects in the fields to bear home for fuel, and also the goods which she conveys to and from the market. A woman always carries this basket on her head (see p. 80, Fig. 38),

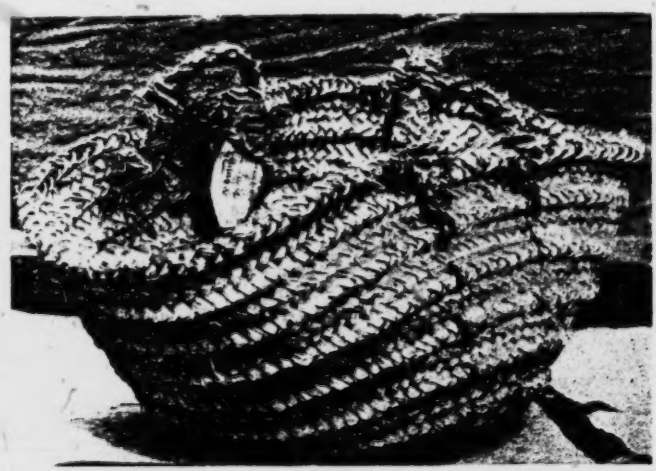

FIG. 83. A MAḲṬAF

the varied contents sometimes including even a small child (see p. 37, Fig. 14).

The habit of carrying their burdens on their heads gives the women their wonderful poise. The heaviest loads are thus carried with apparently the greatest ease. For example, the large water-jars, filled to the brim, are conveyed home in this way by the women without any support from their hands, and without a drop of the contents being spilled (see p. 41, Fig. 16).

Children begin to carry burdens in this way at a very early age, smaller jars, and perhaps somewhat smaller baskets, being used by them. If the heads of the female Egyptian peasants were systematically measured it might be shown that this method of carrying heavy weights from early childhood has made a definite impression on the shape of the skulls, those of the women being possibly much flatter on the top than those of the men. I do not

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Upper Egypt

Women take their full share in the business of selling, and may be seen squatting on the ground, often accompanied by their male relatives, with their goods spread out before them. The market of cheese and *semn*—the latter clarified butter regularly used in cooking—is conducted solely by the women, so far as I have seen, and they bring these provisions in metal pans carried on their heads.

Large numbers of pottery water-bottles are nearly always to be

FIG. 96. A SHOEMAKER ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MARKET

found for sale at the markets, the better ones being made at Ḳena, in Southern Egypt, and exported thence far down the Nile.

The tinsmith also does good business, making mugs (*kīzān*, singular *kūz*), primitive lamps, and other articles on the spot, using for this purpose old paraffin-oil and petrol tins.

A shoemaker is usually to be seen squatting at work in a spot on the outskirts of the market, with a number of shoes ready for sale on the ground by his side (Fig. 96). He has an iron anvil in front of him, similar to that used by the brass- and copper-smiths, described in the first chapter (p. 32). Near by may be seated sellers of musical instruments, such as the pipe (*nāi*), the *summāreh*,[1] and the

[1] Double pipe with a drone.

843 avoids looking at any dead person, and gazes on portraits of handsome men, perhaps magazine cuttings that she has pinned on the wall. She must be able to eat what she likes. If she is thwarted, the child will be seriously affected.

846 783 [852] Immediately after birth the baby is put in a basket, which serves as a cradle, and is not washed for seven days. The first bath has a ritual significance of purification. It is given by the midwife, and the water is poured from a pot (*abriq*) specially kept for this purpose, with different ornamentation for a girl and for a boy. The mother is technically impure for thirty or forty days after, according as the child is a girl or a boy. These Moslem customs are also found in Morocco.

844 [431] If at the moment of birth the father is working in the fields, and the child is a son, a friend will run and tell him the good news, for which he can claim a gift. This tradition recalls a text in Jeremiah: 'Cursed be the man who took the tidings to my father, saying to him "A son is born", and who filled him with joy'. (Ch. XX, v.15).

777 751 As soon as the child is born, a blue bead is hung round his neck to turn away the evil eye. For the same reason the boy of whom his parents are so proud may be dressed like a girl, till he is weaned. His mother will give him suck for two years at least, at far too frequent intervals, thus 853 causing gastric troubles. This is the length of time favoured 842 by the ancient Egyptians, by the black peoples of Africa, 586 and by Koranic precept: "Divorced mothers shall give suck to their children for two full years" (Sura II, 233). The peasant women think that by weaning late they will delay another pregnancy.

854 482 When the time comes for her to go out — and this happens very soon — she carries the infant astride her shoulder, which does not prevent her from carrying a pot full of water on her head. While she is working in the fields she puts her baby on the ground, near the path which threads the crops, in the shadow of the maize. The baby does not always have something to lie on, but rolls in the furrow, puts earth in its mouth, screams, sleeps and gets used to it all. If it cries 853 too loud, any passing mother will give it her breast.

854 857 The child stays at home until his fifth year. He soon gets used to the company of the animals there. Before long he is capable of looking after them and can take the

871 His methods are by no means arduous. Two or three
794 hours a day, six months a year, and in three years the fellah children, helped by the stick, will know a good many *suras* by heart. For his pains the *fiqih* or teacher receives two loaves of bread, or one piastre, a week for each pupil.

872 Nowadays even the girls must go to school, but their
562 turn comes in the afternoon. In the morning they help their mothers and fetch in the water, trying their best to
● [482] balance on their heads the little *ballas* which is given them.
857 When they grow up they will be able to carry seven gallons of water in this way. They are also made to gather dung, bird-droppings, and any other refuse which may be useful in the house or the field. They make fuel cakes (*gilla*) by
[372] taking a little mud, some chopped straw and a quantity of dung, which they knead into a paste with their hands and feet, and then take lumps of, to flatten into cakes about eight inches across. These are spread out on the ground to dry in the sun, or stuck on the wall. When thoroughly dry they are piled up on the roof. These dung-cakes are the fellah's coal; they are an essentially agricultural form of fuel, used wherever wood and money are lacking, for example in China and in several parts of France.

524 The girls have rag dolls to play with, but more often,
857 up to the age of about twelve, they join with the boys in both work and play. Occasionally, from the age of eight
[464] until they get married, they go into service in middle-class homes.

857 These children are ignorant and to all appearance neg-
593 lected. They live in a herd and seem to have no patronymics. But it would be wrong to infer from this that they are of no concern to their parents, and belong to the community at large. On the contrary their parents love them passionately, far more than they, love each other. Children are never put
[736] up for sale here as they are in China, and there is no need for orphanages. Parental sensitiveness is a frequent cause of quarrels among both men and women. If a teacher hits or
861 ill-treats their child they are up in arms immediately to
871 remove him from school and take a brutal vengeance. This does not, however, stop them from using blows and insults to 'educate' their children themselves.

593 The children are also very much attached to both their parents. This attachment seems to be rooted in their

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

19.

×539
821

Song to a sun-shower.

ʿĒb ʿalēk, ya naṭare,
wes-sams mefattaḥe.

Shame yourself, O rain,
For the sun has broken through!

2. Literally: "has opened". The same word is used with flowers which are unfolding, e. g. No. 6, l. 7.

20.

Preparations for a Feast.

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527
821
[252]
[356]
[482]

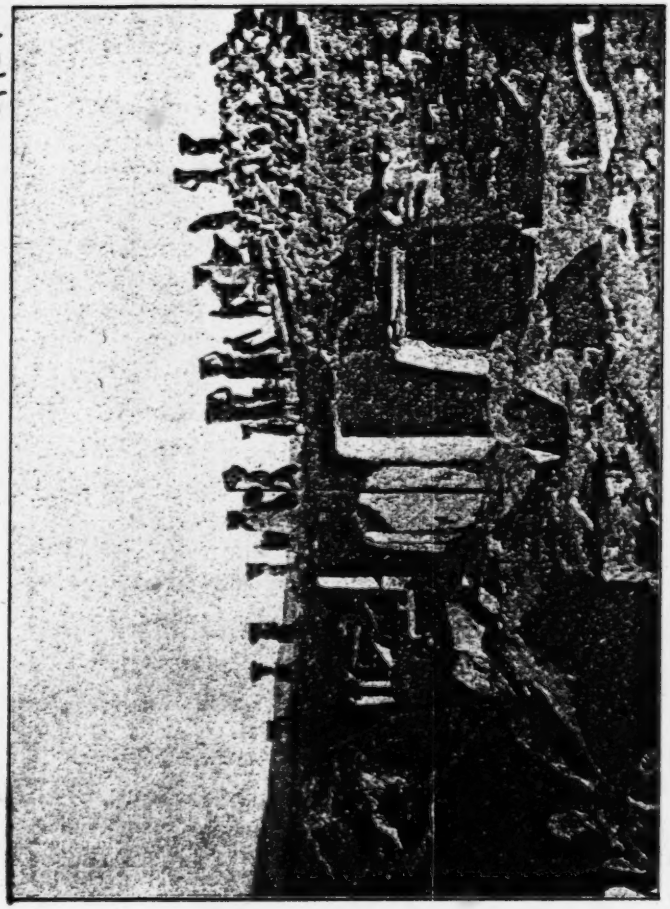
Faṭne (Fatme), the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, and her husband ʿAli, are represented in the song as simple Egyptian peasants. She is about to bake cakes for the feast; first hastily cleaning the house and carrying the basket of sweepings out upon her head. Everyone who is acquainted with Egyptian villages, will have often seen this picture.

ʿAli, the master of the house, to please his wife, has gone as far as southern Upper Egypt, for the sake of an iron hook, for taking bread from the oven. At the beginning, the sun, which has hidden behind the clouds, is requested to show its pleasantest face at the feast; for there is not continuous blue sky in northern Upper Egypt. At Saqqāra, in winter, we [132] often had an overcast sky and heavy rainfalls.

Fattaḥi, ya semīse, ya semīse,
lagl ʿAli u-Moḥammadī
we-Faṭne, bint en-nabi!
u-ʿaginha ʾuddamha.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

172
482
415



Photograph by L. Borchardt.

At the Work of Excavation.

The Boys with their Rubbish-Baskets. (Excavations at Abuqir.)

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

415
482
291
312
142

Women Drawing Water.